Assassination Probers' Subpoenas

Washington

The House Assassinations Committee decided yesterday to issue several subpoenas for information about the murders of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., chairman Thomas Downing said.

Downing (Dem-Va.) and staff director Richard Sprague declined to say exactly what the subpoenas requested or on whom they would be served. Downing would only say there were "quite a few."

Considerable confusion was caused at an open morning session of the committee when staff counsel Robert Ozer said he knew that some documents had been destroyed since the panel was formed last September.

Ozer was cut short by Sprague before he could elaborate, and the committee went into closed session.

But a panel member told reporters outside the meeting that Ozer apparently was referrring to documents held by the Memphis police force in connection with student disorders. A university student had gome to court demanding destruction of files allegedly kept while he was under surveillance.

"We will not discuss what we have information on," Sprague said later.

"Staff investigators were in Memphis . . . On the basis of information coming to our staff, we decided to mount an investigation into whether the information that some information had been destroyed is true and second, if true, if the destroyed documents relate to the work of the committee. We have no way yet to know."

During the morning session, Representative Henry B. Gonzalez (Dem-Tex.), asked Ozer: "were any documents destroyed since the committee was constituted?"

"Yes, sir," Ozer replied. "I believe some documents were destroyed."

After persistent questioning, Sprague said "they are documents we felt relevant to the investigation of the King assassination and they would have been in the possession of law enforcing agencies."